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**DEFENDANT MAKES INITIAL APPEARANCE IN CASE INVOLVING SCHEME TO
SELL VISAS**

SACRAMENTO--McGregor W. Scott, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of California, and Christopher A. Wray, Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, announced today that RAMESH KUMAR JAISINGH, 57, of Fairfax, Virginia, made his initial appearance today following his arrest on October 13, 2003, at Dulles International Airport after arriving in the United States on a flight from Amsterdam, Netherlands. JAISINGH, who was indicted by a federal grand jury in a superseding indictment filed in Sacramento, California, on October 2, 2003, is charged with conspiring to defraud the United States and to bribe public officials and to commit visa fraud. He appeared today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barry R. Poretz, and was ordered held pending an identity and detention hearing Thursday, October 16, 2003.

JAISINGH is one of ten persons, including two former State Department employees, charged with participating in an alleged corrupt scheme to sell visas to enter the United States that operated out of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka. According to the superseding indictment, JAISINGH paid tens of thousands of dollars in bribes to defendants ACEY R. JOHNSON, 32, who was until recently a Consular Associate employed in the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka; his spouse LONG N. LEE, 51, a State Department Foreign Service Officer and career State Department employee; and to LEE's adult daughters.

In addition to defendants JOHNSON, LEE, and JAISINGH, the other defendants facing charges in connection with the alleged scheme are VINESH PRASAD, 33; MINESH PRASAD, 28; and NARINDERJIT SINGH BHULLAR, 40, all of Sacramento; PHUONG-HIEN LAM TRINH, 35, of Torrance, California; and DAVINDER SINGH BHULLAR, 44, who is believed to be in India. Two defendants, RAJWANT S. VIRK, 46, of Herndon, Virginia, and RACHHPAL SINGH, 32, of Newark, California, have previously pleaded guilty in Sacramento to conspiracy to defraud the United States.

The case is being prosecuted in U.S. District Court in Sacramento by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin B. Wagner and S. Robert Tice-Raskin of the U.S. Attorney's Office, and Trial Attorney Noah D. Bookbinder of the Public Integrity Section, headed by Noel L. Hillman,

Chief. The next appearance in the case is scheduled for November 14, 2003, before U.S. District Court Judge Garland E. Burrell in Sacramento. The case is the product of an extensive investigation conducted by the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. Department of State, and by agents with the FBI and several other state and federal agencies associated with the Joint Terrorism Task Force for the Eastern District of California, including the California Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Bureau of Immigration Control and Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security. Sri Lankan law enforcement authorities also provided assistance in the investigation.

The United States Attorney's Office noted that the charges in the superseding indictment are only accusations, and that the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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